

"self-criticism." The campaign is intended to end bribery, extortion, smuggling, and other corrupt practices, in order to win the confidence of the people and also of foreign investors. These investors were initially attracted by the official policies of economic "renovation" and "openness" announced in the early 1990s, but they have been discouraged not only by the burdens of corruption and hyperregulation, but also by the consequent decline in economic growth rates from about 8% annually to just over 4%. Most ominously, many are frightened by the prospect of political instability as a consequence of the steady erosion of the government's legitimacy.

The Vietnamese government seems to understand that it is in danger of losing its grip on power. It has been quietly advised by scholars, international financial institutions and representatives of other governments that it must act to regain the trust of the Vietnamese people. The most obvious way to do this would be through a campaign of renovation and openness extending beyond the economic sphere to include freedom of expression, religion, and the press as well as steps toward more representative government.

Party leaders, however, regard these freedoms as an even greater threat to their power than the current popular dissatisfaction with government. In August 1999, at the closing session of the Seventh Communist Party Plenum, General Secretary Le Kha Phieu stated that "there will be no sharing of power. The Communists will hold firmly to leadership. Any request for democracy, freedom, human rights, or 'peaceful evolution,' is a conspiracy by the enemy forces to erase the socialist regime in Vietnam."

This injunction has manifested itself in strong measures by local authorities throughout the country against actions suspected to be harmful to internal stability and order. Most recently, a number of Hoa Hao Buddhists were imprisoned for participating in a ceremony to commemorate the 53rd anniversary of the disappearance of their founder.

Father Chan Tin, an outspoken Roman Catholic priest and human rights advocate, was recently "tried" in absentia at public meeting organized by the People's Committee in the district where his church is located. Father Tin was charged with such crimes as "seeking to abolish the leadership of the Communist Party" and "destroying the solidarity between religions and the state." And the principal leaders of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, the country's largest religious denomination, remain under virtual house arrest.

The government also recently arrested, searched, and deported French reporter Sylvaine Pasquier, who was apprehended outside the house of former political prisoner Nguyen Dan Que, whom she was attempting to interview. Ms. Pasquier reports that at one point her interrogator made a gesture to simulate a gun at her head and said she could put heroin in her purse and condemn her as a drug smuggler.

Next month Mr. Phieu will make an official visit to France at the invitation of President Chirac—the first visit to a democratic country by a General Secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party since Ho Chi Minh visited France in 1946. The Phieu visit was arranged with the help of the French Communist Party, which recently announced its determination to "rejuvenate the spirit of communism" as a movement committed to "return political power to the individual citizen."

Perhaps Mr. Phieu and his colleagues in the Vietnamese Communist Party will come to share the insight of their French comrades that Communism can only survive by finding a way to coexist with democracy and individual freedom. If not—if they keep trying to cure the consequences of Stalinism with more Stalinism—it is hard to imagine that anyone will be singing songs about the revolution in another 25 years.

Mr. Speaker, I want to salute the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHR-ABACHER) for this excellent resolution.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) for his supportive comments.

Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of the time to the distinguished gentleman from Virginia (Mr. DAVIS).

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support H. Con. Res. 295 relating to continuing human rights violations and political oppression in the socialist Republic of Vietnam, 25 years after the fall of South Vietnam to Communist forces.

This past weekend, April 30, marked the fall of Saigon, which ended the Vietnam war 25 years ago. There were a series of events held across America, including in my district in Northern Virginia, to commemorate this tragic event in history.

Vietnamese Americans from the Washington, DC, metropolitan area gathered this past weekend to honor the fallen heroes who sacrificed their lives in the name of freedom. In addition, they staged an all-night candlelight vigil, a flag ceremony, and a peaceful demonstration to keep the hope and flame of democracy alive for those still living in the socialist Republic of Vietnam.

The Vietnam war took its toll on American families sending fathers, brothers, husbands, and uncles thousands of miles away to the jungles of Vietnam to fight the enemy they could never face. We must never forget that over 58,000 Americans and over 300,000 South Vietnamese soldiers lost their lives defending and protecting fundamental ideals, such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and free and open elections.

Their noble sacrifices should serve as a reminder that the Vietnam war was fought on the principles and values of democracy.

H. Con. Res. 295 is a timely resolution which reiterates America's commitment to political, religious, and economic freedom for the citizens of the socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Furthermore, this resolution urges the government to release all political and religious prisoners and prisoners of conscience, to allow their citizens the right to freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of the press and freedom of religious worship, and more importantly to formally commit to a

framework and timetable for open and fair elections.

Finally, H. Con. Res. 295 recognizes and commends the Vietnamese American community for initiating an international memorial to American and South Vietnamese soldiers who gave their lives for the cause of freedom during the Vietnam war, which will be located in Westminster, California.

I urge my colleagues to support H. Con. Res. 295 to honor all those who valiantly fought during the Vietnam war and to commemorate the fall of Saigon.

I commend the gentleman from California and his staff for their hard work to bring to our attention this important issue.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GUTKNECHT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 295, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF CONGRESS ON INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL'S MAGEN DAVID ADOM SOCIETY AND ITS SYMBOL THE RED SHIELD OF DAVID

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 464) expressing the sense of Congress on international recognition of Israel's Magen David Adom Society and its symbol the Red Shield of David.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 464

Whereas Israel's Magen David Adom Society has provided emergency relief to people in many countries in times of need, pain, and suffering since 1930, regardless of nationality or religious affiliation;

Whereas in the past year alone, the Magen David Adom Society has provided invaluable services in Kosovo, Indonesia, and Kenya following the bombing of the United States Embassy in Kenya, and in the wake of the earthquakes that devastated Greece and Turkey;

Whereas the American Red Cross has recognized the superb and invaluable work done by the Magen David Adom Society and considers the exclusion of the Magen David Adom Society from the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement "an injustice of the highest order";

Whereas the American Red Cross has repeatedly urged that the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement recognize the Magen David Adom Society as a full member;

Whereas the Magen David Adom Society utilizes the Red Shield of David as its emblem, in similar fashion to the utilization of

the Red Cross and Red Crescent by other national societies;

Whereas the Red Cross and the Red Crescent have been recognized as protected symbols under the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement;

Whereas the International Committee of the Red Cross has ignored previous requests from the United States Congress to recognize the Magen David Adom Society;

Whereas the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement state that it "makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions" and it "may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature";

Whereas although similar national organizations of Iraq, North Korea, and Afghanistan are recognized as full members of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the Magen David Adom Society has been denied membership since 1949; and

Whereas in fiscal year 1999 the United States Government provided \$119,400,000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross and \$7,300,000 to the Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That—

(1) the International Committee of the Red Cross should immediately recognize the Magen David Adom Society and the Magen David Adom Society should be granted full membership in the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement;

(2) the Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies should grant full membership to the Magen David Adom Society immediately following recognition by the International Committee of the Red Cross of the Magen David Adom Society as a full member of the International Committee of the Red Cross; and

(3) the Red Shield of David should be accorded the same protections under international law as the Red Cross and the Red Crescent.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) and the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Res. 464, the resolution being considered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, today we are calling up for the consideration of the House, H. Res. 464, expressing the sense of Congress on international recognition of Israel's Magen David Adom Society and its symbol the Red Shield of David, which I introduced along with the ranking member of our Committee on International Relations, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON).

This measure reaffirms our support for justice and inclusiveness in the International Red Cross movement. Resolution 464 lends our support to the efforts of the Magen David Society and strongly encourages its acceptance as a full member into the international governing body of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the ICRC.

The Magen David Society is equivalent to our own American Red Cross. It has served countless citizens of nations in need for over 70 years. It might come as a shock to some that while the national organizations of countries such as Iraq, Libya and North Korea are all members of the International Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, the Magen David Society, though, has been left out. The Magen David Society has fulfilled its criteria for full membership, has requested membership and recognition of the Shield of David as their symbol. The American Red Cross has repeatedly sought to have the Magen David Society admitted as part of the International Red Cross and the Red Crescent Movement but has so far been thwarted by the political prejudices of a small number of its member nations and others that raise what I believe to be spurious issues concerning the adoption of another emblem, the Red Shield of David, into the movement.

Congress in 1987 affirmed its support for the Magen David Society requesting that they be admitted as full members. After 13 years, 13 long years, the ICRC is still dragging its feet on this issue, and the Israeli Magen David Adom Society remains the victim of politics. We must reinforce our support for this praiseworthy organization by passing this resolution, H. Res. 464, and letting other members of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement know that we do not look favorably on this kind of bias and hypocrisy.

A working group charged with resolving this issue has recently decided to call later this year a diplomatic conference of all the signatories of the Geneva Conventions, as well as representatives of each of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. That diplomatic conference will decide whether the Magen David Adom Society will be admitted to the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and whether its emblem, the Red Shield of David, will be accorded the same protections under international law as the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

By adopting this resolution today, the House will put all the participants of that diplomatic conference on notice that this is a matter we take seriously, that it must be resolved fairly and in conformity with the principles of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Movement.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join with us in adopting H. Res. 464.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, let me join with my colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), in his remarks. In somewhat a stunning occurrence over the last 20 years or so, the International Red Cross has argued that the religious symbols they have, the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, are not religious, but the religious symbol that Israel uses somehow is religious.

Frankly, it always astounded me that year after year we would hear from the Red Cross annually that the Magen David was a separate category. One does not want to jump to the conclusions that somehow prejudice has saturated their thinking, but it was very difficult to come to any other conclusion.

Well, after almost 20 years of contact with them on this issue I am frankly heartened that the present leadership of the Red Cross recognizes there needs to be a solution. It has taken all too long. The Magen David Adom has participated in International Red Cross humanitarian crises in Indonesia, in Kosovo, in Greece, in Turkey, in Kenya where the American Embassy in Nairobi was attacked. It has been in operation since the 1930s. It functions with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent in every way, except for official recognition.

It seems to me, as we enter this second millennium, that it is long overdue for the Red Cross to accept what is the American proposal to include the Magen David Adom in these international organizations and to stop what has been, frankly, a bad reflection on what is a great international organization, an international organization that has done so much to save people, to stop suffering, to help people in crisis, to have them continue to battle over what is clearly a prejudice that even they are having a hard time now defending. It is long overdue. I commend the chairman for his efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS).

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend and colleague, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON), for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the chairman of the Committee on International Relations, the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), for introducing this legislation. I want to commend the ranking member, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON), for supporting it.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year in January several of us visited the headquarters of the International Red

Cross, and we had extended discussions with the top leaders of this very fine organization concerning the issue we are debating this morning.

While I must say I am deeply impressed by the work of the International Red Cross, I was appalled by the failure of the leadership in Geneva to take decisive action to put an end to this outrageous form of discrimination.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent have been doing an outstanding job and Israel's parallel organization, the International Magen David Adom, has been there helping in every single international crisis. They were in the front lines of the humanitarian effort both in East Timor and Indonesia and in the tragic bloody crisis of Kosovo. They were among the very first groups to arrive, both in Greece and Turkey, in the wake of the earthquake, and, of course, they stood shoulder to shoulder with us to save American and Kenyan lives following the outrageous bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi.

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I particularly want to commend the Chairman of the American Red Cross, Dr. Bernadine Healy, for proposing that we withhold any dues to the International Red Cross until this singularly appalling form of discrimination is terminated. I strongly support her posture, as I am sure all of my colleagues in this body and in the other body do.

The Red Cross is doing an outstanding job. It should not besmirch its reputation internationally by being part and parcel of an appalling medieval discriminatory measure. The time is long overdue to put an end to this practice and to recognize Magen David Adom as a full-fledged member of the International Society of the Red Cross.

Mr. Speaker, I again want to commend my colleagues for introducing this resolution.

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ROTHMAN).

Mr. ROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I am here today to express my strong and full support for House Resolution 464, and I do want to acknowledge the tremendous work of our chairman, the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), and our ranking member, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON).

Mr. Speaker, what is wrong with the following picture: Many of the nations of the world have what are called Red Cross societies, or societies that provide emergency humanitarian relief, not only to their own people, but to other nations when there are tragedies that occur around the world. There is the International Red Cross, with a red cross as its symbol; there is the Inter-

national Red Crescent in Arab lands with the red crescent as their symbol. The state of Israel has its own version of the Red Cross, which, as my colleagues have said, provides emergency humanitarian relief all over the world, in Europe, Africa, Asia, all over the world, and their symbol in Israel is the Red Star of David.

What is wrong with this picture? Well, the International Red Cross Societies and the International Red Crescent Societies refuse to permit Israel's Red Cross, the Magen David Adom Society, to be admitted into the International Society of Red Cross and Red Crescents. They refuse to acknowledge the legitimacy of that Israeli Red Cross Society, and they refuse particularly to consider including Israel's Red Star of David, which its ambulances and emergency humanitarian vehicles fly overhead, like the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies. We are in the year 2000, Mr. Speaker, and this kind of blatant prejudice still exists.

What should we do as American legislators and as American citizens? The U.S. Government provides to the International Red Cross \$119 million a year. The U.S. Government provides to the Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies over \$7 million a year, those same organizations that refuse to allow the inclusion of Israel's Red Cross, the Magen David Adom Society, which has been providing emergency services around the world, obviously, without regard to race, religion, or nationality since the 1930s.

What should we do? Our own American Red Cross says it is one of the greatest acts of injustice, that the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies will not admit Israel's Red Cross Society, the Magen David Adom Society, and refuses to accept the legitimacy of the Red Star of David. Hypocrisy? Injustice? Obviously.

So I urge my colleagues in the House and my friends around the country to speak loudly about this act of injustice, and, hopefully, through the work of the gentleman from New York (Chairman GILMAN) and the ranking member, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON) and our other members on the Committee on International Relations, finally the International Red Cross and International Red Crescent Societies will do what is right now in the year 2000, and admit the Red Star of David, which has flown over so many tragedies, lending helping hands to peoples all over the world for the last 70 years, to be included in the family of those who wish to help others in need.

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 464 which urges the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent

Societies to fully recognize the Magen David Adom, Israel's counterpart to the American Red Cross, as a member. I am pleased that the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Dr. Jakob Kellenberger, has made membership of the Magen David Adom a priority this year. However, the Magen David Adom has been kept waiting for more than fifty years for full membership. It is imperative that the ICRC recognize the Magen David Adom immediately and not further delay the process. This could be done most easily by applying the American Red Cross' solution: to "grandfather" the Magen David Adom into the ICRC since it has met all necessary conditions to become a national society.

I would like to commend the American Red Cross and Dr. Bernadine Healy for their support and commitment to ensuring full membership for the Magen David Adom. Furthermore, Chairman GILMAN and Ranking Member GEJDENSON also deserve recognition for their leadership on this issue.

I hope my colleagues will join me in voting for this resolution.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,

Washington, DC, April 5, 2000.

DR. JAKOB KELLENBERGER,

President, International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva, Switzerland.

DEAR DR. KELLENBERGER: We are writing to urge the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to recognize the Magen David Adom (MDA) as a full member as expeditiously as possible.

As you know, the MDA was founded in 1930 and is the national humanitarian society in the state of Israel. The MDA is the Israeli counterpart to the American Red Cross and carries out all of the traditional roles of a voluntary medical aid society including emergency medical services, maintenance of blood supplies, first aid, and disaster relief. Unfortunately, despite its dedicated humanitarian relief efforts around the world, MDA has not yet been recognized as a full member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is a worldwide institution in which all national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have equal status. However, MDA is in a decidedly unequal position. The Magen David Adom Society is excluded from full membership in the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement solely because the Red Shield of David, the organization's emblem, is not an official emblem recognized by either the Geneva Conventions governing the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement or the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

While other countries utilize the red cross or the red crescent as emblems of their national humanitarian societies, we respect the decision of MDA in Israel, a Jewish state, to maintain the 70-year tradition of using the Red Shield of David as its emblem. With peace slowly but surely coming to the Middle East and Israel developing progressively more relations with its neighbors, it is time that the ICRC recognize the Magen David Adom as a full member, and the Federation grant it membership.

As you are likely aware, the US House of Representatives passed an amendment last year which expressed the sense of the Congress that the MDA should be recognized as a full member of the International Red Cross

and Red Crescent Movement. Congress may consider additional legislation this year about MDA's exclusion from your organization.

We understand that there have been recent meetings between you and the government of Israel which have brought the two sides closer to a resolution. While we are encouraged by the new positive atmosphere, we will be monitoring this situation closely until the MDA is fully recognized by the ICRC and the Federation.

Sincerely,

Eliot L. Engel; Constance A. Morella; Stephen Horn; Jerrold Nadler; Rush D. Holt; Dana Rohrabacher; John M. Spratt, Jr.; Anthony D. Weiner; James E. Rogan; Henry A. Waxman; Joseph Crowley; Tim Holden; Christopher Shays; Nita M. Lowey; Benjamin A. Gilman; Steven R. Rothman; Tom Lantos; Peter Deutsch; Sam Gejdenson; John F. Tierney; Howard L. Berman; John Lewis; Sander M. Levin; Sherrod Brown; Charles B. Rangel; Juanita Millender-McDonald; Gary L. Ackerman; James H. Maloney; Edward J. Markey; Robert Wexler; Carolyn B. Maloney; Janice D. Schakowsky.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I speak today in strong support of House Resolution 464 to urge the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to formally recognize its Israeli counterpart, the Magen David Adom (MDA) as a full member.

Unfortunately, international bias against the State of Israel still exists today. While the Israeli people have taken tremendous risks in negotiating peace with their Arab neighbors and promoting normalized relations with all nations, anti-Israel sentiment in international organizations still prevails.

The reluctance of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to provide recognition to the Magen David Adom is just another manifestation of this attitude.

The Magen David Adom not only provides important services in the State of Israel but also works internationally alongside other humanitarian relief organizations providing invaluable emergency aid to people in many countries, regardless of nationality or religious affiliation.

Israel's recent response to the tragic earthquake in Turkey underlines that the Magen David Adom is an important member of the worldwide humanitarian community.

I am proud to be a cosponsor of this important resolution.

Mr. Speaker, the House International Relations Committee on which I am privileged to serve, unanimously supported this resolution and I urge my fellow Members to give this legislation the same overwhelming support on the floor today and send a strong message that the United States will not accept discrimination against the State of Israel.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GUTKNECHT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 464.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof)

the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPRESSING CONDEMNATION OF CONTINUED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN REPUBLIC OF BELARUS AND CALLING ON RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO RESPECT SOVEREIGNTY OF BELARUS

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 304) expressing the condemnation of the continued egregious violations of human rights in the Republic of Belarus, the lack of progress toward the establishment of democracy and the rule of law in Belarus, calling on President Alyaksandr Lukashenka's regime to engage in negotiations with the representatives of the opposition and to restore the constitutional rights of the Belarusian people, and calling on the Russian Federation to respect the sovereignty of Belarus.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 304

Whereas the United States has a vital interest in the promotion of democracy abroad and supports democracy and economic development in the Republic of Belarus;

Whereas in the Fall of 1996, Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka devised a controversial referendum to impose a new constitution on Belarus and abolish the Parliament, the 13th Supreme Soviet, replacing it with a rubber-stamp legislature;

Whereas President Lukashenka organized a referendum in violation of the 1994 Belarusian Constitution, which illegally extended his term of office to 2001;

Whereas Lukashenka's legal term in office expired in July 1999;

Whereas Belarus has effectively become an authoritarian police state, where human rights are routinely violated;

Whereas Belarusian economic development is stagnant and living conditions are deplorable;

Whereas in May 1999, the Belarusian opposition challenged Lukashenka's unconstitutional lengthening of his term by staging alternative presidential elections, unleashing the government crackdown;

Whereas the leader of the opposition, Semyon Sharshinsky, was forced to flee Belarus to the neighboring Baltic state of the Republic of Lithuania in fear for his life;

Whereas several leaders of the opposition, including Viktor Gonchar, Anatoly Krasovskiy, and Yuri Zakharenka have disappeared;

Whereas the Belarusian regime harasses and persecutes the independent media and works to actively suppress freedom of speech;

Whereas former Prime Minister Mikhail Chyhir, who was a candidate in the opposition's alternative presidential elections in May 1999, was held in pretrial detention on trumped up charges from April through November 1999;

Whereas the Lukashenka regime provoked the clashes between riot police and demonstrators at the October 17, 1999, "Freedom March", which resulted in injuries to demonstrators and scores of illegal arrests;

Whereas hundreds of peaceful demonstrators and over thirty journalists were arrested during a March 25, 2000, pro-democracy rally in Minsk, once again illustrating the Lukashenka regime's disregard for freedom of assembly, association, and information;

Whereas the Lukashenka regime has refused to engage in meaningful dialogue with the opposition and has used the tactics of delay and obfuscation in disregarding the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)-mediated dialogue process;

Whereas genuine dialogue with the opposition and legitimate, free and fair elections cannot take place in the present climate of repression and fear existing in Belarus;

Whereas on April 3, 1996, Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin and President Lukashenka signed an agreement to form a Union State of Russia and Belarus;

Whereas there have been credible press reports that the Government of the Russian Federation has been providing assistance to the Lukashenka regime since the signing of the agreement to form a Union State, such as official Russian Federation Government credits, uncollected customs duties, assistance for export sales of Belarusian arms and joint manufacturing of arms, and reduced prices for energy supplies;

Whereas there has been a credible estimate cited in press reports that Russian Federation economic subsidies to Belarus reached \$1,500,000,000 to \$2,000,000,000 in 1996 and 1997 alone, enabling the Lukashenka regime to maintain a large police force and state control of the economy;

Whereas the Union Treaty, signed on December 8, 1999, by Belarus and the Russian Federation, undermines Belarus sovereignty and the prospect of democracy;

Whereas the Consultative Council of Belarusian opposition parties appealed to the Government of the Russian Federation, the State Duma, and the Federation Council calling for a cessation of support for the Lukashenka regime;

Whereas the former Chairmen of the Belarusian Supreme Soviet, Stanislav Shushkevich and Semyon Sharshinsky, have stated that economic support from the Russian Federation has been crucial to the survival of the Lukashenka regime;

Whereas a Union Treaty between the Russian Federation and Belarus was ratified by the Russian Parliament and the illegitimate parliament of Belarus;

Whereas the Union Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Lukashenka regime violates Russian Federation Government respect for the sovereignty of Belarus per the memorandum on security guarantees signed by Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin at the December 1994 Summit of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Heads of State in Budapest, Hungary; and

Whereas the introduction of any nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus, a declared non-nuclear state under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, would be a violation of Belarus's obligations under that Treaty; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress—

(1) condemns continued egregious violations of human rights by President Alyaksandr Lukashenka's regime in the Republic of Belarus;

(2) further condemns the Lukashenka regime's conviction and sentencing of Andrei Klimov, Vasilii Leonov, and Vladimir Koudinov on politically motivated charges and urges their release;